

WFAN

Transcript from 10/29/04

CHRIS RUSSO: Got some attention today we happen to agree on this particular topic, but Marv the season is not going to be back here in the next few days. Marv is not going to be behind a microphone now with the Knicks for the first time what in 30, 40 years. Marv is not there. He had some things to say about how Jim and Cablevision "doesn't allow me to be critical," what have you. He made comments again today. Give me your thoughts on the Marv thing. You fired him and he is an institution. I don't think you have any second thoughts about it. He continues to snipe at Cablevision about censorship and all that.

JAMES DOLAN: Marv's departure really had you know, had to do with two things: One and probably most important was it had to do with money.

Marv was making more than twice what anybody else at the network was making. He was doing only 50 games and he always has priced himself like national network talent. Honestly guys, I mean, as much as I'd like to be a national network, we're not. We have to live under the economics of a regional network even though it's the number one market.

No. 2 is the thing is probably more controversial is we did ask Marv to -- we didn't tell him that he couldn't criticize the team or criticize the players, but we asked him not to characterize the team as a bad team for the season, because then why would anybody watch. And what really came out of it is that Marv didn't like the team.

In three, four years that I have been running The Garden, Marv not once, not once came down to see the team at a practice. He didn't talk to the players. I basically think he didn't like the Knicks. It came out in how he called the games. And we had asked him to look at it. I guess he got offended by that, but you know, I think that Knicks fans when they turn into tune to Madison Square Garden Network and hear the Knicks telecast, they want to hear a straight and honest call, but they expected to hear it from somebody who is, you know, a fan of the team.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Do you believe, Jim, first, was this an economic issue in your mind as far as his departure first, or was it the idea of "I am going" or was it the second part as you talked about, the control of the criticism? Which one is the reason why he's not here anymore economic or the criticism?

JAMES DOLAN: Well, we didn't renew his contract and --

MIKE FRANCESCA: Did you offer him a lesser deal?

JAMES DOLAN: We did not offer him a lesser deal, and I doubt he would have taken it anyway.

MIKE FRANCESCA: There was no negotiations?

JAMES DOLAN: No.

CHRIS RUSSO: You had made your decision sometime in the last year or so you know you wanted to go in a different direction?

JAMES DOLAN: First off, I didn't make the decision all by myself. I made it with the management team there Mike McCarthy and the group, and we were in agreement that we couldn't afford him.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Did anybody object or they all agreed?

JAMES DOLAN: Nobody objected. We were in agreement.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Are they allowed to object to you?

JAMES DOLAN: Yeah, they do all the time.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Some places guys aren't allowed to. It's your money, your team. You might say, "You know what guys, I am in charge."

JAMES DOLAN: That's just not the way I run my organization. Way too big.

MIKE FRANCESCA: They could have input?

JAMES DOLAN: Yeah, and they make a lot of calls themselves.

MIKE FRANCESCA: None of them objected to the change?

JAMES DOLAN: No, we had, you know, we talked about the fact that he had been there so long and so it's not a decision I think that anybody came to lightly and he has got a very good style, play-by-play style.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Legendary guy in this town.

JAMES DOLAN: I think that we saw it as a negative losing him overall, but when you add in the fact that we couldn't afford him and then on top of it that there was some negatives to how he was calling the game, overall we decided not renew.

CHRIS RUSSO: Obviously some examples that people have brought up is how Marv felt that he was sort of being you curtailed in what he could do.

We read one today regarding "Let's show Richard Jefferson walking off the bench and see if we could get Richard Jefferson suspended in last year's playoffs." Did MSG get that detailed in specifics with what Marv may have said critically on the Knicks or is it more of a general thing about his broadcast over the last 25, 30 years?

JAMES DOLAN: From my point of view, I mean, that particular incident I mean I wasn't there.

CHRIS RUSSO: Jim Dolan, who --

JAMES DOLAN: No, I didn't --

MIKE FRANCESCA: Where do you watch the games from? Are you in the arena?

JAMES DOLAN: If I am there I am courtside.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Do you watch every game?

JAMES DOLAN: I can't watch every game.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Do you watch a lot of games on TV or in the arena?

JAMES DOLAN: I will watch them on TV.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Do you pick up the phone and call the production truck?

JAMES DOLAN: No. I don't even know the number.

MIKE FRANCESCA: These calls didn't come during the game?

JAMES DOLAN: I think they probably did but...

MIKE FRANCESCA: Not from you?

JAMES DOLAN: No.

MIKE FRANCESCA: What are they coming from?

JAMES DOLAN: They will come from guys who are at the game, I assume. Either McCarthy or you know, possibly Steve Mills. I really don't know.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Is it because you have set down a strict criteria of what you want to hear and not hear, is that what they are going by?

JAMES DOLAN: No, especially not with that particular incident because I think you know, as I recall that incident we had had somebody, I think, in a similar --

CHRIS RUSSO: Tim Thomas.

JAMES DOLAN: He got suspended, I think. They were looking for a level playing field and they didn't get it, I guess.

CHRIS RUSSO: Marv is a guy that has been a New York institution and he's been here forever, and he's been a voice -- people associate Marv with those great teams. Doesn't Marv get more of a license to be his own man when he's calling the team? And so if he maybe nitpicks and occasionally gets a little too critical you, Jim Dolan, have to overlook it because he's Marv Albert?

JAMES DOLAN: Sure. I mean I would agree with that.

CHRIS RUSSO: Mike and I can get away with a lot more than the guy doing the show on the weekends.

JAMES DOLAN: Nobody is standing over our guys that they are saying "You have got to do it this way or you have got to do it that way." I think the comments that were made to Marv were made much more about overall style, throughout the season.

CHRIS RUSSO: "Let's try to be positive."

JAMES DOLAN: Look the team, you know, particularly that last season, you know, we changed coaches, right, Isiah came on. We thought we were doing better and we did do better.

I remember one call I heard, which was from Boston, where Marv just clearly didn't think the team was a any good.

MIKE FRANCESCA: There was this feeling, the sense is that Marv walked away because he was told to "do it this way or you are not going to be back," it sounds like he didn't have a chance to come back. Did Marv have a chance to come back?

JAMES DOLAN: That's the point is that look, is that --

MIKE FRANCESCA: Marv didn't get an option here?

JAMES DOLAN: No.

CHRIS RUSSO: So you didn't want to bring him back? Money big part of the reason?

JAMES DOLAN: Money big part of the reason.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Did he quit?

JAMES DOLAN: We just didn't renew him.

CHRIS RUSSO: You obviously have a capable and very good play-by-play guy in his backup Mike Breen, that makes it easier to get rid of Marv.

JAMES DOLAN: We still pay, as far as I know, the highest salaries for a regional sports network.

CHRIS RUSSO: Now you are putting Breen in a tough spot.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Breen has been painted with a tough brush here. I am partial to Breen. I know him very well. No. 2 your organization has, it's almost like Breen comes in and it's almost like he has handcuffs now, which is a tough way to do the games. What is your comment about that?

JAMES DOLAN: I trust Mike Breen. I think he wants the Knicks to win. That's all I am really saying is that, you know, you want your guys to want your team to win. And he can say, you know, whatever he wants. There's no censorship on him.

MIKE FRANCESCA: They have a bad night he can say "they are stinking up the place"?

JAMES DOLAN: He can say "they were terrible tonight, they were sluggish, et cetera." Let's hope he doesn't do that too often. If he does that means we're not playing too well.

I don't expect our guys to say, you know, "Look how great they are," while we're missing layups.

CHRIS RUSSO: Not to get away from Marv, the one thing I wanted to ask you, maybe just think of it, the Sprewell thing last year, when he got all over you, which was completely out of line, and Mike and I killed Sprewe, we will about that for a long time. Completely classless. There were some people who said later that Dolan started it because Jim got on Sprewell during the course of that game, and Sprewell retaliated. I won't think you would have done that. Did you egg Sprewell on that day?

JAMES DOLAN: No.

CHRIS RUSSO: He was nasty. He was all over. You did not start that?

JAMES DOLAN: No. Look, you know, it's been a while now since he's been gone. I think it's been in my opinion, it's been beaten down, but you know, no, I did not start that.

He was upset because you know, he got traded. And because we were asked why, we traded him and we honestly said why. He doesn't like it, okay. I think it was the wrong thing to do. Obviously so did the league; they fined him. But you know it's over with.

CHRIS RUSSO: When Marv had his problems and he wanted to come back to -- he wanted to go back to work, was it your father? Who hired him back?

JAMES DOLAN: I approved it.

CHRIS RUSSO: So Marv came to Mike McCarthy -- you knew Marv's reputation, you said you know what, he deserves a second chance? "I want him back"?

JAMES DOLAN: Yeah, I actually think it was Mike to Dave to me.

CHRIS RUSSO: Checketts, that is?

JAMES DOLAN: Yes, to Dave Checketts. I am a big believer in second chances.

CHRIS RUSSO: Do you think Marv then has shown you disloyalty by not only leaving but by throwing a lot of gasoline in the fire on the way out the door?

JAMES DOLAN: Well, you know, I mean.

CHRIS RUSSO: Are you mad by what Marv has done?

JAMES DOLAN: I am disappointed. I don't think there's any other way to put it, just to say that I am disappointed.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Let's get back to the Yankees. You guys have been in control, you Cablevision, since '94 by yourself since '98. You knew what the Yankees were, they were already in the move when they decided, you know, when it was going to cost a lot of money. They were the centerpiece of what was the most successful regional network in the country, and you knew how big they were, how important they were. Obviously it was a huge outlay. If you had a chance to go back today, would you pay the Yankees?

JAMES DOLAN: You know, I thought you might ask that question.

MIKE FRANCESCA: It's water under the bridge, I know, but was it a bad move? Would you pay them?

JAMES DOLAN: I would have probably tried harder. But in the end, I don't think that that would have done anything.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Did you call their bluff about a network, not thinking they would really start one?

JAMES DOLAN: No, I mean, I thought that they would start one but I didn't think that the -- that other distributors in the marketplace who want to pay that kind of money and I think if there's a mistake that we made in that one it was underestimating that, because we thought that you know, the rights fees that they were going to ask in order to beat the offer that we gave them, which was a substantial offer, hundred million dollars a year, and we thought the other distributors weren't going to want to pay more than that. We knew we would have to raise rates in order to do it or to cover the kind of thing that they wanted to do, it would take so much more money that, like I said, we thought distributors won't want to do it. The public wouldn't want to pay it, et cetera, and we didn't want to be caught holding the bag with that. I was wrong.

CHRIS RUSSO: That leaves us to this. 2001 we have the terrible tragedy here, 9/11. They are on YES, you did not put the Yankees on your basic that year; they were not on Cablevision. Did you do that partly out of spite because you have said you were upset that the Yankees left the network?

JAMES DOLAN: No, it was for the same reason I told you before, the rates had to go up substantially in order to do that. The Yankees wanted to be carried right on basic. And you know what they originally proposed, right, was -- a very high rate. It started off higher than what we're paying now and what our customers are paying now, but it ramped up rapidly. Ultimately it got up close to what about four dollars for everybody, not just sports fans, but -- per month. We weren't willing to levy that onto our customers, just like we weren't willing to pay that kind of money in rights fees as Madison Square Garden. We did not think that that product is worth that kind of money.

Ultimately what happened is it went to arbitration and we got the fee reduced, and it won't be that kind of fee. But it's still very high and I would say that you asked me about if I could go back, I think I did -- I underestimated what the marketplace was willing to do, assuming that what you believed that what we're paying now is dictated by the marketplace.

MIKE FRANCESCA: The Yankees, we understand where they went. Obviously you have admitted that.

No. 2, now you are in a place where your network desperately needs a jolt. It's not what it once was in terms of its power, part of that is because you had a bad baseball team. Now you are sitting there maybe having no baseball team, which leads us to the Mets.

A regional cable network without a baseball team for sports, that's a tough way to do business.

JAMES DOLAN: I agree.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Where are you right now with this Met thing?

JAMES DOLAN: Right now we're, as you know, we're in litigation over how the contract that we had ended, and so I can't really talk too deep about that.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You didn't get a TRO? Yesterday turned down for TRO?

JAMES DOLAN: We didn't really expect that.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You have got a court hearing coming up in a couple of weeks?

JAMES DOLAN: Right.

MIKE FRANCESCA: But your only complaint was that the Mets started too early, not that they can't get their own network but they started too early. They didn't have the rightaway to go out and do it before a certain date, right?

JAMES DOLAN: From our point of view, that would have given us more time to try and you know, convince them.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Sound like the Mets are gone. Sounds like they are on their way.



JAMES DOLAN: It does to me, too.

MIKE FRANCESCA: What does that mean to the Madison Square Garden Network?

JAMES DOLAN: We're still working on it, on what we're going to do during the summer. But you know, the whole sports regional sports network landscape has changed. I mean it changed with the Yankees. And the Mets are just on the heels of that.

MIKE FRANCESCA: The Yankees have created a model for teams.

JAMES DOLAN: And this isn't the only city that this is happening in.

MIKE FRANCESCA: They are all going to find out that they are not the Yankees, though, when they try to do this. It's going to be a lot harder for other teams than it is for the Yankees only because they are the Yankees, they are easy to market.

JAMES DOLAN: There is no other market like New York, I agree with that, but there is no other market that is going to be sporting four networks.

MIKE FRANCESCA: So does this mean the collapse of the regional sports network in your mind?

JAMES DOLAN: I think it means it's a fragmentation of it, that's what we're seeing in New York is that the Yankees have a network, the Mets are going to have a network. We have hockey we have basketball, fortunately we have that product still with Madison Square Garden, so I mean, but we need two networks to cover that. We have got four teams in the winter. And so you are going to have four different networks. Each one of them, right, is going to price itself under the Yankee model. And that's going to be a big ticket.

CHRIS RUSSO: What would bother lot of fans is that if you own the Yankees you will do some things that will help Cablevision and put the games on so everybody could watch them, but when you don't have the Yankees you will make it harder for your fans and your people who subscribe to Cablevision to get the Yankees. In Cleveland you might do something a little different for Cablevision in Cleveland than you would here for Cablevision in New York, as far as the basic channel and everything else. Some places where Cablevision is conducive to Cablevision to put them on basic they do so. In other places where it helps you the, heck with basic and make them pay a premium --

JAMES DOLAN: The story which is basically whether you are going to put it on an a la carte basis or on basic has to do with pricing. There's been legislation proposed in the Congress of the U.S. to take all the sports programming and put it on a la carte basis because sports programming now accounts for better than a third of our total programming costs and obviously you know, not everybody is a sports fan. Probably everybody you know is a sports fan, but not everyone is and they are all saddled with the cost and that was you know -- I mean when it gets to be very expensive, the thing to do is to say "okay, it's that expensive. Only the people who really want it should pay for it."

Now when it's in a situation where it's not that expensive and it's in thrown with other programming costs, then sure, you know what, you will have comedy networks, too and movie networks and you got a sports network and everybody, you have a basic charge that covers all of them, and you know, everybody pays for a little bit of something that they don't want, and they get a lot of what they do want.

CHRIS RUSSO: The point is though is that it sounds like that sometimes you do what is conducive to Cablevision, you don't care about the fans per se, that if you don't have the rights, you are going make sure you pay them, but if Cablevision owns the rights they will throw them on basic. That doesn't seem to be --

JAMES DOLAN: Well, one of our proposals originally to the Yankees is that we would all go on a la carte.

CHRIS RUSSO: Including the teams that you run?

JAMES DOLAN: Including the teams that we run. That got rejected, too.

MIKE FRANCESCA: What is Cablevision going to do when these teams all come up with their networks? You are going to be able to play ball with all those different factions in the year to come?

JAMES DOLAN: Well, you know.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Black out the Mets somewhere in front of 3 million people?

JAMES DOLAN: No, I don't think so. I don't know that, you know -- I don't know that Cablevision can fight this battle all by itself. To be honest, we didn't get any help from, you know, the next company that you would think would be as concerned as we would be.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Are they your competitor, though, in essence?

JAMES DOLAN: No.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Maybe they are kind of a competitor, don't they consider themselves a competitor?

JAMES DOLAN: No, I don't think so. They operate -- we don't overlap anywhere in terms of where we operate.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Nowhere?

JAMES DOLAN: Nowhere. We're both in this marketplace.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You also can't just get together and do anything, act in a certain way together because that's illegal?

JAMES DOLAN: Right. But you know, I mean, the rhetoric out of Time Warner for years and out of the whole cable industry is that programming costs and sports programming costs too much. Mostly the target of that has been ESPN, right, where you know, that was the network that started off at like 30 cents now it's like two dollars and 30 cents.

MIKE FRANCESCA: They are double-dipping because everybody on both ends, so ESPN is making a fortune in this model and Congress didn't give anybody relief, so they are going to keep making all this money.

JAMES DOLAN: ESPN, their contracts run with 20% annual increases. So you asked me whether we're going to have this fight again with the Mets.

MIKE FRANCESCA: That's the first thing the fan cares about, is Dolan going to turn around with Cablevision now and blackout the Mets for a year?

JAMES DOLAN: I don't think that we will.

CHRIS RUSSO: How about this, we get calls about this all the time especially when you had the argument and the fight with YES, if you have DirectTV you can't get the Metro Channel, which means you cannot get Islander or Devil playoff games on the dish. And you at times had put those games playoff games on the Metro Channel, which meant and people thought "Well, that's just Jim Dolan trying to screw the poor guy." So you will get back at them by putting the playoff games on the Metro Channel. We hear this all the time.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You do have ways of battling satellite. On Long Island satellite is a competitor. You don't put News 12 on satellite you don't put the that traffic channel and weather channel only a satellite, you can only watch it on cable.

JAMES DOLAN: Which one do you watch?

MIKE FRANCESCA: I watch DirectTV. It's a better product I have to admit.

CHRIS RUSSO: How about that, Jim?

MIKE FRANCESCA: I like News 12.

JAMES DOLAN: I am not going to go into a commercial, but you should try the digital service. It's better than DirectTV.

CHRIS RUSSO: How about the idea that you have at times, as Mike just indicated, you have had at times cherry-picked with certain big games that the winter teams play and not made them available to people who have DirectTV based on this Yankee war? How about that?

MIKE FRANCESCA: Do you do that on purpose?

JAMES DOLAN: In most cases the games on Metro Channel have been overflow games, or games where the scheduling didn't work.

CHRIS RUSSO: Occasionally?

MIKE FRANCESCA: You have got to admit you get a little bit diabolical with that. You'd be crazy not to.

JAMES DOLAN: No. No. Let me finish the answer.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You'll tick off a whole town. You'd love that.

JAMES DOLAN: But we have taken certain key games and we have used them to strengthen the Metro Channel which is a cable-only channel.

MIKE FRANCESCA: We're going to take a break. We have gone through some of the TV stuff. We have got other stuff. Let's get to a point of contention where we have beaten you up and beaten that building up. Your beloved Rangers, who have been an absolute embarrassment. Take it away.

JAMES DOLAN: Well, you know, let me start off by just saying that I understand anything that I say here, right, that does there's not going to be anything that's going to make you feel better about the Rangers.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Maybe you can make the fans feel better. Don't worry about us. They need some hope is what they are looking for.

JAMES DOLAN: Because I mean I think in the end it's going to be about -- until we get those, it's all basically talk because we haven't done it.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You went and got a big guy and brought him in and I know you love him. I know you are very high on him. He had a great career but that's a long, long time ago. The question I have, how has he kept his job? In New York you don't get to keep your job that long when you are this bad. He has done nothing since he has got here.

JAMES DOLAN: That's not true. I understand why you say that, you look at the record of the team and what has happened with it.

MIKE FRANCESCA: And what he promised the playoffs every year.

JAMES DOLAN: I understand, but I was there with him.

CHRIS RUSSO: But the 10% discount.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Which you still owe once they play hockey?

JAMES DOLAN: You bet.

MIKE FRANCESCA: How about Sather? Why are you so still high on a guy that has failed miserably on a job when he promised big things? He was in Edmonton and said "If I ever have that payroll it's a joke. Anybody could win there." He came in and promised big things and has delivered nothing.

JAMES DOLAN: Okay. You know what, you need to know why, I need to tell you why, whether it will make you happy or not, I can't guarantee that. But when Glen first came on and you take a look at the Rangers, we had no farm system at all. We had no scouting system at all. We had no system by the way to organize that, and we had no development system. And we had no prospects or youth. We would go from draft to draft. We would pick a guy, you know, take our number one pick. We would send him up to Hartford, right, and 9 times out of 10 we dealt him away. We weren't out actively looking at youth at all. We weren't looking at the Triple A's and all of the farm systems, et cetera. And on top of that Hartford, which is our minor league team, was primarily had veterans and they were out to win the Calder Cup, and actually they did win it. But they won it with veterans, which means that nobody from that team is going to come up to the Rangers and that was basically what Glen started with.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Glen brought a bunch of veterans and he brought a lot of high-priced guys in.

JAMES DOLAN: That was the strategy which we were together on, the strategy was, okay, what we're going to do is, we're going to build up these three areas, the scouting, the development, the farm system, et cetera, because Glen recognized right from there that what we needed was the youth and the team but we weren't going to get it. That wasn't something that you could buy. That's something you have to build. So we decided we would we would buy in veterans, we would go with a veteran team and as this system underneath developed and matured and started to push players through, we could then start back on getting veterans and replace it with you know, young new talent. That basically was the strategy. One part was start with veterans and two was to basically morph into this team that was fed by the farm system. And the problem is obviously the number one did not work. And by the way it didn't work because we couldn't get the players, I mean when you take a look at the team, and the players that we had and the talent that we had on the ice, we had some of the best talent in the NHL on the ice. We didn't make the playoffs.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Also brought in bad coaches.

CHRIS RUSSO: I think that's the big thing. Trottier, Ron Low, Glen brought in the coaches. Trottier should never have gotten this job. Low was an average coach. He brought in coaches that could not make this team mesh. Most GMs or owners across the country don't get a chance to hire two, three, four coaches, yet you gave Glen opportunity after opportunity to bring in all those coaches that haven't worked. Most GM's on any scorecard don't get that opportunity.

MIKE FRANCESCA: There's this feeling, Jim, that you just personally really like this guy. That maybe another guy would have walked the plank under you, but that you just have an affinity for this guy.

JAMES DOLAN: Look, I like Glen. I also like Scott Layden. And Scott is not with us anymore. I have to make my decisions based upon the --

MIKE FRANCESCA: You don't think Sather has done a good job, you are not going to say that?

JAMES DOLAN: I would tell you on this other piece on the development, the farm system, et cetera, that he's done a fabulous job and you know, it was just, what was it, a year or year and a half ago. We were rated in terms of youth in our organization 29th in the league. That same rating organization now rates us I think eighth or ninth. We brought in a lot of young talent that -- Glen also, you know, when we finally came to mid-season last year before the trade deadline, Glen was the one who said "this is not working, we just have to go into rebuild."

CHRIS RUSSO: By the same token brought in Jagr making 68 million dollars. How could you say you are going to regroup and rebuild and then bring in Jagr?

JAMES DOLAN: First off, Jagr, we were still trying to make the playoffs when we brought on Jagr. I think really to be honest, that was like when it became you know, we got to the trade deadline. We weren't certain of making the playoffs, that you know, I mean that's the straw that I think broke the back for Glen, that he just didn't think that there was another piece of talent or something else that was missing from here, or I think he even feels and to be honest I don't know, in terms of the coaching, which coach was going to make this work. You guys, I mean, look, take a look at --

CHRIS RUSSO: How about Ken Hitchcock?

JAMES DOLAN: Wait a second.

CHRIS RUSSO: He had won a Cup for the Stars and you never hired Ken Hitchcock. He had won a Stanley Cup, goes to Philly, they play well in Philadelphia and he brought in Trottier instead. That's a terrible hire. You cannot -- you can't survive that in pro sports.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Plus he has got a great job where he can bring in zillions of dollars of talent, fall on his face, then you think he's doing a good job because somehow he built the minor league.

JAMES DOLAN: I said I am not necessarily happy with --

MIKE FRANCESCA: We would like to come to work for you. Geez, this guy has been a disaster. He's been an unmitigated disaster. He made promises every year. He was arrogant about it and he has flopped on his face and he runs away from the media now, and does interviews in Saskatchewan. The guy has been a joke.

CHRIS RUSSO: Whether you like him or not you can't dispute --

MIKE FRANCESCA: He doesn't even come to us anymore. He runs away, he doesn't come on anymore. He does Canadian interviews and you get it on the wire service. He's embarrassed your organization --

CHRIS RUSSO: If you felt that it was going to take a while, why do you promise to make the playoffs every year?

JAMES DOLAN: We thought we could make the playoffs every year. Understand.

MIKE FRANCESCA: How about one year? You never made it any year.

JAMES DOLAN: You know, this is not a fact that's lost on me, Mike.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You are hear facing the music, and your coach won't face the music in this town anymore. He's run away the last year.

JAMES DOLAN: I don't know that Glen hasn't -- he's telling me that he won't come on the show.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Not just our show, he doesn't do anything, then you get wire service quotes from Canada.

CHRIS RUSSO: Last year he left. He did some radio interviews in Vancouver. I know some guys in your organization didn't like -- didn't come onto the local stations. It bothered people. In New York you have got to face the music in New York. If you are making big money you have got to face the music.

JAMES DOLAN: Glen certainly, he was getting fried by the press.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Rightly so. He's earned that.

JAMES DOLAN: Okay, but after he has gotten fried like that, if you expect him to come and ask for some more, you know, I can understand why he might not want to do that.

MIKE FRANCESCA: The thing is you are the guy here with Sather because it's not about Sather anymore. It is about whether you think Sather can somehow lead you out of this mess with the Rangers and you



are saying you do believe that. That's what your fans want to hear. Do you still have faith that this man is going to lead you out of this mess?

JAMES DOLAN: This is what I believe in, what I believe is that we built up a great farm system. We have great young talent. And that we need -- we're in this phase of rebuilding and I believe that we have jump started it because of what we did before the trade deadline last year. That was really key.

CHRIS RUSSO: Why does Layden get fired in the same amount of time and you move in a different direction and not fire Sather?

JAMES DOLAN: That sort of thing -- I mean, that's sort of the crux of it, because with Glen, with the moves that he's made, particularly as I said with the farm system, et cetera, right, we have seen things essentially go the way that the -- he's done the things that we have asked him to do except win.

CHRIS RUSSO: Layden doesn't have a farm system -- it's not the same in the NBA. There's no farm system. He's in a much different situation.

JAMES DOLAN: I am not going to tell you -- I mean -- but the point of it is that you know, I don't rely on the one man right to sort have to bring me there. I asked whoever is the president or the general manager I say "what is your plan?" Right, how are you going to bring -- you know what our goal is.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Didn't you ask him why he was spending all these zillions of dollars and not getting any return for it?

JAMES DOLAN: Yeah, I did. We went through the plan. Both guys, right, Isiah, too.

MIKE FRANCESCA: We'll get to Isiah in a minute.

JAMES DOLAN: I want you to know you want to know why Glen is still there. He's still there because I asked him what his strategy was from the day that he started, actually before he started. "How are you going to execute it? What are you going to do? What are the points of it that where are we going to look for the success of it?" A good number of those he's delivered. He's never -- he's tireless, he works hard. He cares.

CHRIS RUSSO: Even though he's in Palm Springs half the time.

JAMES DOLAN: He's not. You know where he's at right now, he's in some God forsaken place in Canada looking at youth hockey. He's not like that, Chris. He works real, real hard.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You are saying despite -- and you said he's done everything for you but win, when that's his only job is to win, in my mind.

CHRIS RUSSO: He's been there for four years.

MIKE FRANCESCA: He came in with these big statement, "I guarantee this and that."

CHRIS RUSSO: He's too defiant about it.

MIKE FRANCESCA: He did nothing.

JAMES DOLAN: Only if he knew how this was going to turn out he wouldn't have said that. Obviously he believed that was true. Obviously I believed that was true. I would have told him not to say that.

MIKE FRANCESCA: In sports you pay the piper when you don't get the job done, he hasn't. Other guys have. Your answer is that you still think that he has set up an infrastructure that's going to be positive for you?

JAMES DOLAN: I do.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Has he told you when this is going to start to bear fruit?

JAMES DOLAN: When we start to play hockey you will see a different Ranger team on the ice.

CHRIS RUSSO: You must have asked him, "Glen, how do we end up a Ron Low, Bryan Trottier?" This is New York, anybody wants to coach our team with our resources in the Big Apple. I'm just using one guy as an example because he comes to my mind. You have that one guy Harper in Tampa, forget about Tortorella, who is winning championship s -- you had Hitchcock you had a chance to hire Ken Hitchcock. I don't know how much of a hockey fan you are, he won a Stanley cup. He was dying to come here. You end up with Bryan Trottier. How did you allow that to happen?

JAMES DOLAN: And what is Glen's resume?

CHRIS RUSSO: It was a long time ago. He has got a good one.

MIKE FRANCESCA: If you can get Messier and Gretzky and Grant Fuhr and all those guys back together again, I guess they will win again, but you know what, he hasn't won since they left. It's been 20 years.

JAMES DOLAN: This is a guy -- you cannot say he's not had a --

CHRIS RUSSO: He's a Hall of Famer but it's ten years ago.

MIKE FRANCESCA: There are guys who get fired who did it great the first time and leave and goes to a second place and it doesn't work. It happens a lot in life. Sather here came in big resume, big mouth, a lot of money, promised things, fell on his face. Fell on his face. You'd even have to admit -- you are giving discount.

JAMES DOLAN: I don't like giving discounts.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You are giving 10% off.

JAMES DOLAN: In the end, fellas, the first thing is that, you know, yes, obviously I do think that Glen is the right person for the job right now. And second of all, I told you when we started off on this part of the conversation that I wasn't going to make you happy and that the only thing that it's going to prove this and I recognize that's winning. That's what we're going to have to do. We're going to have to --

MIKE FRANCESCA: Twofold, what is your message to the hockey fan from your inside view of when they will play hockey if you have one, number one, and then B, what they can expect from your product this year, whenever it is they take to the ice?

JAMES DOLAN: Well, I can't tell you when we're going to play hockey.

CHRIS RUSSO: Do you have a feeling?

JAMES DOLAN: I don't.

CHRIS RUSSO: Do you think they are going to play this year?

JAMES DOLAN: I don't know. I want to. I don't know.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Do you have a hope?

JAMES DOLAN: Sure.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Do you get any feeling from talking to your people?

JAMES DOLAN: It's very quiet.

CHRIS RUSSO: Do the Rangers, who have a huge payroll, do they need a new system or is it the small franchises, the Islanders, that need a new system? Are you happy with the way the current system was or does Jim Dolan, himself, need a price guarantee as far as the future is concerned? You have got a 90 million dollar payroll, can you continue to look that way.

JAMES DOLAN: I have got a 50 million dollar payroll.

CHRIS RUSSO: It was 90. You have cut some money off. Do the Rangers, to survive in hockey --

JAMES DOLAN: I know your question.

CHRIS RUSSO: Could you live with the old system or need a new system?

JAMES DOLAN: We're together as a league, that's the best I can tell you.

CHRIS RUSSO: You can go with the system if you had to?

MIKE FRANCESCA: They can stand alone.

JAMES DOLAN: We're going to stick with all the rest of the teams.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Let's say in January things come back and you get a league going, play NHL in January, what do you think what message do you give of hope to your Rangers fans, who are a great group of fans?

JAMES DOLAN: The best.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Who are enormously loyal, passionate they show up all the time. The fans are there. What do you say to your fans?

JAMES DOLAN: I tell them to come see the team because what you are going to see is you are going to see a lot of youth in the team.

Now, look, the same thing you have got to understand, they are going to be young. They are going to get down the ice faster, they are also going to make youthful mistakes, but come see this team because this is going to be the team that you are going to be watching for the next ten years, you are going to love them. You are going to see things in it that you haven't seen on the Rangers in a long time, because we haven't had this kind of youth on the team. And it's the kind of hockey that I think they will love to see.

CHRIS RUSSO: Is Sather on any kind of thin ice?

JAMES DOLAN: You know, I won't comment on that, Chris.

CHRIS RUSSO: How about if some of these young players turn out to be busts?

JAMES DOLAN: If you would ask me if Scott Layden was on thin ice three days before he was gone, I would not have answered you. I never comment upon -- because the guy's got to do his job, right, and he doesn't need that kind of pressure.

CHRIS RUSSO: You allow Sather to do his job?

JAMES DOLAN: I do.

CHRIS RUSSO: You do not interfere at all?

JAMES DOLAN: No.

CHRIS RUSSO: I am getting back to what -- this team there's this feeling here in New York that you are his buddy, so Jim Dolan, who was a hockey fan as a kid --

JAMES DOLAN: And basketball fan and Jet fan, too.

CHRIS RUSSO: You get the idea that Jim is Sather's buddy and Jim Dolan is not going to get rid of his buddy, who by the way who he revered, you know, 20 years ago when he was winning 6 cups with Edmonton, so --

JAMES DOLAN: That's not true. I was a Ranger fan and Islander fan, and actually as an Islander fan. We really didn't like Glen that much.

CHRIS RUSSO: But you admired his ability.

JAMES DOLAN: You didn't want to see your team get beat.

CHRIS RUSSO: You have a close relationship with him?

JAMES DOLAN: I do.

CHRIS RUSSO: Does that affect your analysis his ability of doing his job?

JAMES DOLAN: No, because I had a close relationship with Scott and with Don Chaney. I love Don Chaney.

CHRIS RUSSO: Do you socialize with Sather versus other guys?

JAMES DOLAN: No different than other guys.

CHRIS RUSSO: Wives go out, things like that?

JAMES DOLAN: No, it doesn't --

CHRIS RUSSO: They are trying to find out why this loyalty with Sather.

JAMES DOLAN: They don't understand it.

MIKE FRANCESCA: None of us understand it.

JAMES DOLAN: I am trying to explain it to you. I have done the best I can in a short time. In the end it's not about just trusting the man.

CHRIS RUSSO: You believe in the youth of the team?

JAMES DOLAN: I do. I have seen what has been built. I believe -- in the end I am a business manager, I believe in process. I believe in structure. I believe that you don't count on an individual, you count it on the way an organization works to deliver, that no one individual can't be lived without. And you build a healthy organization and you know, I think that Glen has done a lot to build a healthy organization there. We haven't won. They are completely understand everyone's frustration with it. I am frustrated. He's frustrated. When we play hockey again, we have made changes, we think they are going to work, come see the youth of the team.

CHRIS RUSSO: I am going to start with a philosophical question. The problem with the Knicks and it really is part of what is being in New York. There are a couple of spots here where this franchise should have rebuilt; should have tore it down. 20-win seasons away you go get a couple of lottery balls, get a little lucky, go from there. But the problem with the Knicks and Cablevision owning it, everything is charged so much money for tickets that you feel that somehow the John McEnroes and Spike Lees sitting courtside are not going to stomach paying a thousand dollars a night to see an 18-win or 23-win or 25-win team, and as a result of that you go about it the wrong way. You feel like this, make the playoffs, get to a round, maybe we get hot, maybe something goes on. You don't build championships that way. We all know how you build a championship: Go lousy, get some picks, and the Knicks get caught in that cycle. Charge so much money. It's New York City, The Garden is a theatrical event that as a result you at times have made mistakes in trying to sort of build on a foundation that was kind of crumbling. Give me your thoughts about that.

JAMES DOLAN: I think that there were two -- when you go back into the history of it there are two things: One thing we could do, could have done something about and one we couldn't have done anything about.

What we couldn't do anything about was L.J. and his back issue. Big salary.

MIKE FRANCESCA: He was a good warrior for you.

JAMES DOLAN: He was the best.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Was tough, unselfish. He did a good job.

JAMES DOLAN: The way the system works is when a player like that, who is making a big salary, gets a career-ending injury, which he had, I mean he couldn't play anymore, his salary still counts towards the cap. Even though I mean we got -- we got insurance money on it and we were able to pay Larry out of his contract, et cetera, but you aren't left with any room to go out and get somebody to replace him. And then we had a couple of things Luc Longley sort of fell -- it was similar but L.J. was I think probably the toughest. That's the one we couldn't do anything about.

The one that we could have done something about where we made a mistake, I have to tell you I agree with you, was with Patrick.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Should have kept Patrick.

JAMES DOLAN: Yes, we should have had Patrick finish out his career in New York.

CHRIS RUSSO: You are going to pass the blame on Checketts on that?

JAMES DOLAN: No, I was there.

MIKE FRANCESCA: The feeling there was this, but the basketball team then Checketts and Van Gundy. Van Gundy felt that it was a disaster for the design of his team if Ewing was still on the team, unless he got his money. He wasn't going to get his money. They felt that was going to have a very negative impact on the team and he didn't really know how much Patrick had left, either so I think -- I think basketball guys wanted Ewing to go because they felt it was impossible to keep him in this sliding condition, on a team where he didn't get the money that he thought he deserved.

JAMES DOLAN: I think and what Chris said basically about you know, about working in New York, about the feeling of the Knicks in New York and being successful and you know, our fans and yes, we have very high ticket prices and needing to put on a winning team, there's a lot of pressure there, we made a mistake. In hindsight we really should have finished had Patrick finish his career here. It would have been better for Patrick; would have been better for us. And we would have had to probably accept a season or two of not doing as well. But we didn't.

CHRIS RUSSO: You paid it in the long run.

JAMES DOLAN: In the long run. The thing about mistakes like that and Larry Johnson, they have a way of just staying with you because now you are in a situation where you don't have an L.J. You are trying to make up for it, so then you have to give away a little bit of the future in order to get something good now, and the more you do that you stay mediocre. But we're fortunate, we have got Isiah Thomas and I think that he has done a fantastic job and we're moving out of that. I think we got you know, I am very excited about the team. I think we're going to be -- we're going to make the playoffs. I do believe we will. And I hope we go beyond that and the basketball I've already seen has been exciting basketball.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Let's go back a little bit. Relationship, let's start with three things: One, Van Gundy, the feeling that there was this bad relationship between you and Van Gundy from the beginning.

JAMES DOLAN: You know, Jeff is very intense coach and he focuses in on his players and his team, and so I don't think we had a relationship.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Did you give Jeff any reason to believe he was going to get to stay a long time or did Jeff see the handwriting on the wall and think, "you know what, they are going to fire me anyway"?

JAMES DOLAN: I don't think he thought that. That isn't what he said -- I can tell you there certainly was no discussion about it. He was a pretty successful coach for us. And we obviously, the -- were shocked, taken back when he did what he did when he left.

CHRIS RUSSO: He claims any contract extension -- he didn't think his owner believed in him.

JAMES DOLAN: You know --



CHRIS RUSSO: Did you believe in Jeff Van Gundy because it spiraled -- you loved Chaney but you don't say anything about Van Gundy. Did you think Van Gundy for you was a good coach?

JAMES DOLAN: I think Van Gundy was a very good coach for the Knicks.

CHRIS RUSSO: You did not want to fire him?

JAMES DOLAN: I did not want to fire him.

MIKE FRANCESCA: There's this story that's gone on for a long time that you got incensed with Jeff and the Knicks when, I am pretty sure it was at least the story, that as related to me, I wasn't there, was that you were talking to the team and Sprewell and Camby left while you were talking, and you got incensed that they got up and left when you had a talk to the team.

JAMES DOLAN: That didn't happen. I think I know where that story comes from. No one left while I was talking.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You were incensed about them getting up and leaving whatever the meeting was about?

JAMES DOLAN: The team was holding a training session, it was not necessarily directly basketball related, but having more to do actually with the press and that kind of thing.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Were you angered by them getting up and leaving?

JAMES DOLAN: I think everybody was upset that they got up and left.

CHRIS RUSSO: Did you blame the coach for that?

JAMES DOLAN: You can't blame the coach for that.

CHRIS RUSSO: He would think that's a waste of time, "Why are we having this media session? My job is to win games." Blah blah blah.

JAMES DOLAN: Jeff's job was to win basketball games and coach the team. And so you can't fault him for that. I think he did a good job.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Now let's get to Layden. Layden, listen we did a lot of interviews with him. He's a nice man. I get charged with beating him up on the air, which I didn't try to but he was -- he's a nice person. I don't think he was well equipped in terms of handling the media to be here from that standpoint. What made you make the change with Layden when you did.

JAMES DOLAN: Well, look, the guy is, you know -- I do like Scott and I still consider Scott to be one of my friends, and I am not going to sit here on your show and trash him.

MIKE FRANCESCA: I am not asking you what made you make the move -- you hadn't made the move with Sather, you made one with Layden. Without getting into specifics what made you think it was time to make a change.

JAMES DOLAN: Because what we saw was that the strategy, and what we thought needed to be done and with the team in order to get the team to perform better was not happening.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Let's get to the coach. I know you have talked about you had great affection for Chaney. Were you upset the way he was let go when he came to the arena that day and -- his wife was incensed, the idea with the cab, the whole thing about it made it look like you guys could give a damn that you were bouncing him out the door.

JAMES DOLAN: We try to be careful. It was a situation where I mean there was a timing thing having to do with the upcoming game that the bringing in a new coach and, you know, and talking to Don and just there was a crunch in time and --

CHRIS RUSSO: You would agree that Isiah did not handle that properly, would you agree?

JAMES DOLAN: I think Isiah tried to.

CHRIS RUSSO: You said at the time that you were not happy.

JAMES DOLAN: I am not happy with how it turned out, no. I am not happy with -- I spoke to Don, I called, but I think you also got to remember I mean, Isiah, was in the job, what, 40 days and he wasn't you know, used to New York media yet, et cetera. Although I have to tell you he's a pretty adept guy.

MIKE FRANCESCA: He's not a babe in the woods. He's pretty sophisticated.

JAMES DOLAN: Isiah certainly had no intention of disrespecting Don and no one in our organization wanted to, and it wasn't the -- I mean we tried to do it in a way that would work, but I mean we had timing

issues and that made it really difficult. All I can tell you is that I think everybody did the best they could. But you are right I am not happy with how it turned out.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Now Mills had a relationship with Isiah, which is how Isiah came into the mix. What sold you on Isiah to come over and take over your organization?

JAMES DOLAN: A lot of it had to do with Steve. Steve is -- he's now actually had both Glen and Isiah report to Steve directly and Steve reports to me. And Steve and I did this together and he brought -- he did bring Isiah in and he strongly recommended him. Isiah and I talked. I got a sense for what kind of person he was; what kind of character he was, that's somewhere where I do think I can make a judgment, but I can't make a judgment about his basketball skill other than take a look at his record. He has a very good record. Look what happened in Indiana. He built that team in Indiana. He brought in those kids.

CHRIS RUSSO: Donnie Walsh did. Depends on --

JAMES DOLAN: I certainly think he takes some of the credit and Steve I really -- said he had a great eye for talent. Obviously, I mean, I trust Steve's judgment and Steve was obviously right because I mean, Isiah --

CHRIS RUSSO: That gets us to the other thing that I would say, that it hurts the Knicks, the Knicks are a better team. No question about it. You are going to win. I know you are in a bad division.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Maybe win the division.

JAMES DOLAN: I'd like to think we're also better not that the rest of the division is --

CHRIS RUSSO: But you are not a championship team.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Shaq is now in the division.

CHRIS RUSSO: I know the Marbury thing, and you did some things and you got Crawford in here, but, Jim, you are still not a championship team and you won't be under this group here, because of no size, all those kinds of things for a long period of time.

JAMES DOLAN: You can't say it's going to be a long period of time. I won't disagree with you that, you know -- I mean we certainly have not proven ourselves to be a championship team. But you can't say it's going to be a long time, because we have Isiah Thomas at the helm, and if you take a look at what he's done with this team since he's come on, and the amount of improvement that he's made and if you think that if he can just make as much improvement in the team from here for the next year that he's made in the last year, then you would have to say to me that this could be a championship team.

CHRIS RUSSO: I agree but I don't think he can do that.

Did you have to give Allan Houston 100 million dollars?

JAMES DOLAN: Yes, at the time --

CHRIS RUSSO: That contract kills you now. He can't even play. Did you have to give him hundred million?

JAMES DOLAN: If I knew that Allan was --

CHRIS RUSSO: Couldn't you give him 50 million?

JAMES DOLAN: Look, Allan, and you have to go back to the time when his contract was up, very healthy Allan was considered to be the purest shooter in the NBA and you know, a night-after-night, 20-plus scorer, and there was competition for him. We couldn't -- you talk about getting that player into the team. Here we had a guy, right, we can't let --

MIKE FRANCESCA: Guys who are not a elite player is now given a max contract. I think he's a very talented player. He's injured. He was a great shooter. I think he was getting better as a player. I think there are a lot of places where now great players are getting max contracts. I have no problem with the Houston deal. I don't think they had any choice.

CHRIS RUSSO: You still like what Isiah has done? Are you very high on Isiah?

JAMES DOLAN: Very.

CHRIS RUSSO: You like Lenny Wilkens?

JAMES DOLAN: I think Lenny is a great --

CHRIS RUSSO: How about the idea that Isiah pines to coach? Does that worry you sometimes?

JAMES DOLAN: No, I mean, I think Isiah makes good decisions for the team. If some day Isiah thinks that it's a good decision for the team for him to coach --

CHRIS RUSSO: You are going to go along with it?

JAMES DOLAN: Probably.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You happen to be on the same side for a very different reason; we don't like the stadium there. It makes no sense to us, the expense of it and everything else. Your issue is purely profit but can you make a case, a city case, not a Madison Square Garden case for your profit, can you make a city case why that's a bad decision to build that stadium for the Jets on the West side.

JAMES DOLAN: Absolutely.

MIKE FRANCESCA: We know you have a dog in the fight; this is going to affect your bottom line. Can you make a factual case?

JAMES DOLAN: Let me address that part first, because you are right, we do have, as you call it, a dog in the fight. We do think that this is going to affect The Garden's bottom line. We're not afraid of competition. But this is government-subsidized competition. And then people go "Well, you know what, you get a government tax break." You know what, the Yankees get that tax brake, the Mets get it, if the Jets came to New York, they'd get that tax break, plus the 600-plus million dollars.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Make a case from the standpoint of the City. You know what is the argument for the layperson that doesn't own The Garden, why is the reason that a New Yorker doesn't want the building in New York City.

JAMES DOLAN: Number one reason is that this thing is never going to make money, it is based on what they call like voodoo economics, most of which we haven't even been told about, they won't explain where they are going to get the money from. It will not produce enough to cover the City's bill on this and so therefore, you are going to cover the bill. You are going to end up paying not just in the first years that it's built. You are going to forever pay that bill on that stadium because that stadium doesn't work on the West side. I cannot produce what it needs to produce in order to cover that expense. They say it's 1.4 billion. Fellas, let me tell you, it's going to be a lot more than that. But you just take the 1.4 billion and I can tell you it will not work. It will not cover what the city has to put into it.

CHRIS RUSSO: Even with the Super Bowl and Final Fours and expanded convention centers and all that?

JAMES DOLAN: Right, even with that and you know, most of that's a myth when you take a look at the actual facts involved with the thing, you know, there's just not you know, it's basically 8 to 10 football games. It's not going to be able to used during that time as convention space and even if it was a convention space, nobody uses a stadium like that as convention space. Indianapolis tried that. They are tearing it down because it doesn't work. That thing is going to be sitting 300 feet high on the West side. It's going to look like a mausoleum. It's not going to be busy a good portion of the time.

We're going to be paying as taxpayers the bill for all of that.

MIKE FRANCESCA: No one is going to take anyone who is on the other side is going to say "hey listen, this is about him and his greed and his profit." Everything else is Madison Square Garden, which they logically do have a dog in the fight. We're opposed for different reasons I don't think any taxpayer should ever put a dollar in your pocket or Woody Johnson's pocket to build any of your stadiums. You have plenty of money to build your own stadiums. That's unfair that these people in a city where they can't fix the roads, the schools, pay firemen, no way should you guys get subsidized for anyone. That goes for any of you owners.

JAMES DOLAN: We're renovating The Garden. It's going to cost us 300-plus million dollars. It's all on our tab. We're not for asking any government agency for help on this.

CHRIS RUSSO: What would you lose if they build this building? What impact would it have? Would you lose all the big concerts? What would you lose? You still have Knicks and Rangers there, what would you lose in terms of business?

JAMES DOLAN: Look, we would definitely lose concert business, attraction business but more so, because if it's government subsidized they are going to have -- we're going to have to compete on price. They are going to compete on price with the subsidy on the government. I am going to compete on price with a subsidy from nobody.

CHRIS RUSSO: On what?

JAMES DOLAN: Concerts.

CHRIS RUSSO: They are going to be able to seat more people. If somebody wants to put on a 30, 40,000 seat thing they can put it on, you can't.

JAMES DOLAN: If you take a look at the Independent Budget Office's report on this, there's only so much of that business, not enough to support this stadium.

CHRIS RUSSO: There's only a few Bruce Springsteen concerts that can sell out 40,000 seats.

JAMES DOLAN: In order to keep the place busy they are going to have to go after the business that already is in The Garden, and by the way that same Independent Budget Office says they are going to have to go after business that's going to be in the new Javits Center. And the big hotel in order to bring in enough money to cover that bill. You know what, it's going to be a competition. Everybody is going to -- everybody is going to have to, you know, take a cut in order to compete, and you know what I don't mind competing. If Woody Johnson wants to buy that stadium, and put it up on the side there and pay it with all his own money, God bless him.

Other people are going to have things to say about the environment, et cetera, I think they are right, too. If he wants to do that, go do it. You know what, I won't say anything about it. But that's not what is going on here. It's being done with taxpayer money and it's being -- it's being attached to be shoved through without anybody looking at it. There are commercials we put out there, there are real serious questions about this stadium, and I will tell you that the mayor is right, and the Jets will not address that. What they want to do is they want to say look "it's Cablevision, look it's Madison Square Garden. Look they doesn't want competition. Don't believe them, build our stadium." The fact is that there are real serious questions and they don't want to answer them.

MIKE FRANCESCA: What are the serious questions? Address what the serious questions are.

JAMES DOLAN: Number one, is how are you going to raise the money to do this?

MIKE FRANCESCA: They are getting 600 million dollars from that Battery Park Fund.

JAMES DOLAN: They are going to float 600 million dollars worth of bonds. Another serious question, is it really 600 or it is really 700? And how are you going to pay those bonds back? And the answer to that, by the way until the thing even gets going, there won't be a dime of revenue so that's all going to come out of your pocket, too. And is that all the cost that there is? What about the Second Avenue extension? Those are serious questions. What about the fact that if you are taking away business from, yes, from The Garden and from the Javits Center and convention centers. Aren't you just taking it from one hand and putting it in the other?

CHRIS RUSSO: How about the redevelopment of the West side? Let's face it, I go down there all the time. I can argue about no need for a subway line down to Second Avenue. That's not -- I could see there could be some improvements to build up that area because the City needs to produce --

JAMES DOLAN: Wonderful.

CHRIS RUSSO: If the City has got to get it started by throwing five, six, 700 million dollars in the City in 10, 12 years, they get all that money back. How?

JAMES DOLAN: They don't get the money back. You don't need a stadium to do that. In fact it makes the whole thing a whole lot more expensive.

CHRIS RUSSO: You agree with expansion of the Javits Center?

JAMES DOLAN: Absolutely agree with the expansion of the Javits Center.

CHRIS RUSSO: Are you anti-Olympics, of the Olympics coming to New York City in 2012?

JAMES DOLAN: We're not anti-Olympics, but you know what, I think that we should ask questions, we should ask questions about what the Olympics, you know, what it will be for the city. I mean, look we had the Republican National Convention and we were told it was going to bring in hundreds and hundreds of million dollars of dollars.

CHRIS RUSSO: Probably cost 75 million.

JAMES DOLAN: I don't even want to tell you about the cuts that we had to take in order to get that thing in there.

CHRIS RUSSO: You are saying the convention lost money for the City?

MIKE FRANCESCA: Just based on security.

JAMES DOLAN: It didn't do what they said it was going to do.

MIKE FRANCESCA: In neither city, Boston or New York?



JAMES DOLAN: Right, what we really need to know what the Olympics are going to do. You don't have to consider that now because no host city has ever had a stadium under construction before it got the bid.

CHRIS RUSSO: I am glad you brought that up because I have seen those commercials you have done with Bloomberg who had that statement and you have used those quotes. Here's the problem I have with that argument. You are going up against London -- let's say for the argument right now I am pro-Olympics, which I'm not, you are going up against Madrid, London and Paris. All three cities, especially the two leaders, have existing stadiums they have an Olympic 85, 75,000 seat stadium. That's a huge leg up. The IOC is not going to give New York City an Olympic games unless they know -- until they see the shovels in the ground before July 5, 2005. They are not going to do that. Would you agree with that?

MIKE FRANCESCA: I think it is a moot point. I don't think New York has any chance if they don't get that started. I think even if they start the building they still won't get it.

JAMES DOLAN: What are you going to do, build a stadium --

CHRIS RUSSO: We have got to show them it's in the process of being built.

JAMES DOLAN: Athens, they got the Olympics. Do you think they had their stadium built before?

CHRIS RUSSO: No, they did not.

JAMES DOLAN: Do you think they had a shovel in the ground?

CHRIS RUSSO: But they are weren't going up those kind of cities though.

JAMES DOLAN: The paint was still wet on the stadium when those people were walking into it. If the Olympic committee granted New York the rights, do you really believe that the Olympic committee is worried that New York is not going to build its Olympic stadium after it gets the rights for 2012?

CHRIS RUSSO: That's a good argument.

MIKE FRANCESCA: No, they probably would.

CHRIS RUSSO: Do you think the IOC thinks that if they give them the games they would figure out a way?

MIKE FRANCESCA: The point is see, this argument, and although you have done a lot probably for that West side group, which has always been very strong in what they do, in that they stopped Westway, they are very good with environmental issues, New Jersey says they are going to file lawsuits against them as soon as they get it approved anyway for the -- there's plenty coming. But it's funny or quite eerie when you see Cablevision involved because no one -- and I am sure you would agree with this, does not have any image where they think Cablevision is looking out for the little guy or for someone else's money.

JAMES DOLAN: First off, I told you what our motivation was. I am not trying to hide behind that. But at the same time I don't necessarily agree with your characterization of the company. Do you know that Cablevision has spent tens of millions of dollars wiring these public schools?

MIKE FRANCESCA: Do you think you look good keeping the Yankees off the air all that time? You look like a villain to these people. They are saying "Cablevision is screwing us." That's what we hear everyday.

JAMES DOLAN: If we didn't fight the Yankees, right, you'd be paying a lot more for the Yankees right now. If it wasn't for Cablevision --

MIKE FRANCESCA: Cable companies have a bad image in the community anyway. They always think I only got one choice in my town and --

JAMES DOLAN: Is that true?

MIKE FRANCESCA: Not anymore, no. Maybe one day it was true.

CHRIS RUSSO: Mike makes a great point here. It's strange -- you are working with environmentalists people who just because they don't progress who are worried about traffic, you are working with bedfellows here to go against the stadium, construction and the whole deal and that sits wrong with a lot of people. I can understand if you are on the same page for the same reasons.

JAMES DOLAN: I don't disagree with you, I want you to understand that if we weren't there, right, that thing would be being built right now.

MIKE FRANCESCA: They stopped Westway because of some fish in the water that was going to be endangered. They stopped them cold for 14 years.

JAMES DOLAN: I am pretty sure there's no fish involved with us other than the Miami Dolphins..

CHRIS RUSSO: There's a 900-page environmental study. They will find something to scream about in there.

JAMES DOLAN: The thing is they won't be heard. This mayor won't listen to them. I asked them about the environmental study. You know what he will say to you, he will say "look, you are just trying to impede my progress. I don't need that."

They put together an environmental study it's completely bogus. I am telling you that they were going to railroad this thing through.

CHRIS RUSSO: In other words, if Cablevision doesn't fight this right now you believe there will be a stadium being built?

JAMES DOLAN: Absolutely.

MIKE FRANCESCA: But the man who is going to be governor of New Jersey told me on the phone said, "We will lawsuits from New Jersey the minute they get that thing approved."

JAMES DOLAN: He would have been too late. If we didn't do this what we did already I am telling you that the ground would be broken now.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You at least up front admit you have a very different motive than the folks on the West side who -- at least you put it up front that you have an economic issue.

JAMES DOLAN: There are other pieces of it that we don't like, too. For one thing is if they build that thing it is going to take five years to build it.

CHRIS RUSSO: You can't get up 31st Street now.

JAMES DOLAN: You know what it's like to sit on this thing a half an hour to go a block. The only group that that's good for are the guys who run the radio stations.

CHRIS RUSSO: It used to be tough getting up 31st Street in those days.

JAMES DOLAN: Just to add a little fuel to that fire, the plan is to build a Jets stadium. If we did get the Olympics there is no money for the 180 foot extension that would have to go over the West Side Highway in order to make that thing viable for the Olympics. They would build the extension right over the highway.

CHRIS RUSSO: A road?

JAMES DOLAN: No, I am talking about making the field bigger so you could have track and field.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Plus there's no money now for the Olympic Village. They thought somebody would be stepping up for that, which is another 3 billion dollars. There's a lot of things -- they are not going to be in good shape with that Olympic -- their Olympic bid is smoke and mirrors. We went through that already.

CHRIS RUSSO: You think you deserve some of the credit making sure that this stadium doesn't get built?

MIKE FRANCESCA: You want a little pat on the back for keeping this --

JAMES DOLAN: I don't want a pat on the back, just not a stab in the back.

MIKE FRANCESCA: There has been this sexual harassment suit in the paper, a little smaller than the one that obviously was written about Bill O'Reilly for two weeks. There has been this one that has dealt with some of your young executives at The Garden. Where does that stand?

JAMES DOLAN: It's in litigation, so once again, I am limited about what I can say. All I can tell you is that we're fighting it and that we believe that our executives, when they heard about it, when the issue was brought to us that we acted properly and you know, the courts will tell in the end.

CHRIS RUSSO: Are they still working for Cablevision?

JAMES DOLAN: They are still there.

CHRIS RUSSO: You didn't suspend them without pay?

JAMES DOLAN: Nope.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Is the young lady, who was the skating coach, is he still involved with the Garden?

JAMES DOLAN: She's gone but we're not doing any skating now anyway.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Always rumors about this, is the business of The Garden, which is Madison Square Garden, the MSG Network, the two teams, Radio City, is it for sale?

JAMES DOLAN: No. You can't ever say that nothing is.

CHRIS RUSSO: Everything has a price.

JAMES DOLAN: Right, but we're not looking to get out of the business, no.

CHRIS RUSSO: The theme that since Jim Dolan took over the Knicks and Rangers the teams have gone downhill instead of uphill. It has been a disaster. That may be too strong but that's what some of the critics of Cablevision would say. Your thoughts.

JAMES DOLAN: I think the records of the teams stand for themselves. I would have liked to have started off with a championship. That would have been nice.

CHRIS RUSSO: Your first year was spring '94? Would that be your first?

JAMES DOLAN: We were partners with ITT. They ran it from '94 to '98.

CHRIS RUSSO: You were already involved monetarily? Cablevision was in in '94.

JAMES DOLAN: But we weren't managing.

CHRIS RUSSO: You were managing starting in?

JAMES DOLAN: '98. Then I personally --

CHRIS RUSSO: "Since Jim Dolan has been there, the teams have been awful." How do you comment on that.

JAMES DOLAN: I think that the hockey team has not been good, and I think that the basketball team has continued to improve, and that we're on the right track.

MIKE FRANCESCA: The Garden, if you go back to '93, '94; a storied year. At the time MSG Network was the number one regional network in the country. The Garden was at the top of the universe in New York. Is that day gone or do you believe there's some day that you can get that back or is that a gone era because of what happened to the network and everything else?

JAMES DOLAN: I can't tell you whether the networks are ever going to be what it was back then, because I just don't know that times are going to allow that. But The Garden itself and the teams that play there and the attractions, et cetera, we're going to go through a big renovation and I have spent a lot of my time in the last three years, working on things like the infrastructure of The Garden, because a lot of things that The Garden has are throwbacks to the '80s and the '70s in terms of how we did business, how we handled our labor, how we handle our clients and our accounts, we have made a lot of changes; change is not easy and it always has some sort of down cycle associated with it. But I do think that The Garden is going to continue to be and will be the world's most famous arena, and great place to go to and even more fun and it will be modern. I think our fans are going to love being there.

CHRIS RUSSO: Second big theme, I am the wrong guy to ask, I don't do as much on this; it doesn't interest me that much. The theme that, forget The Garden, that Cablevision itself doesn't care about its consumer. You're a monopoly. You charge anything you can as much as you can any time.

JAMES DOLAN: We have been with faced that as a company and as an industry since I have been at the company.

MIKE FRANCESCA: You guys are lousy at PR. You guys have always had a bad image. Really have. You do some heavy-handed stuff because you are powerful guys. Your father built an empire. You are a part of it. Cablevision has had a bad image as owners.

JAMES DOLAN: Because we have been a monopoly.

MIKE FRANCESCA: "Only game in town, screw you."

JAMES DOLAN: Name me a monopoly that has a good image.

CHRIS RUSSO: There isn't one.

JAMES DOLAN: But we're moving out of that. We have competition. And we're actually providing a lot of value right now to our customers.

I don't want to go into a big commercial but if you let me, right now you can buy cable service; you can buy high speed, the best modem service in the country, Cablevision offers it; and have Optimum Online; and unlimited local and long distance, you can get all three of those for 90 bucks a month. That's the best value in the country.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Tell me why for a second why, and I have both, so I am an idiot for having both but I do. Why is the cable product Cablevision, why is it better than DirectTV? What do you have that they don't have?

JAMES DOLAN: I have got a network.

MIKE FRANCESCA: They have every channel in the world. What else would I need?

JAMES DOLAN: You have got to turn on your cable box. You have got Video On Demand. You have got 750 movie titles. You can start them whenever you want. You got interactive games. The whole network now is live with interactive content and the ability to see stuff when you want it, instead of having to make an appointment to sit down in front of your TV.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Do you agree that Cablevision has had this haughty, screwy consumer image?

JAMES DOLAN: I told you before I think that comes directly from having been a monopoly.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Do you feel you have been heavy handed with the public and the consumers?

JAMES DOLAN: No, I don't. I think that I think we have done the best we can with the industry that we're in. The industry is a tough industry, and I think if you talk to people who have cable service in other parts of the country they will --

MIKE FRANCESCA: You are going to promise the Met fans that you won't block them out? You have them in 2005. 2006, are you going to promise them you are not going to block them out for the whole season?

JAMES DOLAN: You know what, I will promise you I will make every effort to get them, but if I told you right now that if I actually promised that, then they can charge 10 dollars a subscriber. I can't give that leverage away.

CHRIS RUSSO: You make it sound like you are trying to protect the consumer, who you really want to protect is yourself.

JAMES DOLAN: The interest of the consumer and the company that's providing them service are not diametrically opposed to each other.

CHRIS RUSSO: What's good for you is good for them?

JAMES DOLAN: Exactly right.

MIKE FRANCESCA: I'll give you a little break with the Knicks. After 11 years you were going to take a fall after the Ewing era. That's basketball. It's going to happen. It happened with the Bulls, the Jazz. I understand that. When you look at The Garden since you took over, have you done a good job or a bad job?

JAMES DOLAN: I give myself a C, but I am getting better.

CHRIS RUSSO: Thanks very much for two eras.

I thought from the team standpoint he handled it well.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Everybody's business is separate. Someone else's is a different cable system then the next system. It's very difficult to get involved in -- listen, Cablevision, as we said cable companies always had a very bad image because they are always monopolies. We tried to cover a lot of ground in the two hours. There's a lot of issues. A lot of them are push-button issues and they affect people because certain things affect certain people in different areas as far as The Garden, the future of The Garden, the West side and one thing just to show you that we tried to be fair here, we offered the Jets --

CHRIS RUSSO: Woody Johnson specifically.

MIKE FRANCESCA: -- the chance to come on and we said we have talked to Cross a couple times on the issue. Dolan is coming in here, he owns The Garden. Okay, I know it's a public company but let's be honest, Cablevision owns the company and owns The Garden and he's chairman of the company. And the Dolan empire owns The Garden, and since that's the case, you got to come in with Woody Johnson, you can't put Cross up. Mills is Cross. So you got Dolan here you have got to put Woody up. He wants Cross to talk but we have already talked to Cross we're going down the same road. We're not going to gain any new ground with Cross.

CHRIS RUSSO: We can't do the No. 1 guy with one guy and the No. 2 guy with someone else.

MIKE FRANCESCA: We offered Woody a chance to come on and counter whatever he thought was unfair about the West side issue and give his point but he declined.

PHONE CALLER: I want to talk a little bit about the Dolan interview. The guy is a clown. Cablevision is a monopoly it's a joke.

CHRIS RUSSO: He admitted that.

PHONE CALLER: For him to say that it's better than DirectTV, he's out of his mind.

CHRIS RUSSO: I told him DirectTV was better but he doesn't own DirectTV. You are going to come on and say that the company you work for is not as good as the company across the street.

CHRIS RUSSO: Did he get better rates for the consumer that Yankee fight?



MIKE FRANCESCA: Dog, I don't know. That's why I asked him about the Met thing. Listen, they do heavy-handed stuff, we know that. We have been through it a million times. You try and get to the bottom of some different things that we have been trying to get to the bottom of for a couple years. I still don't understand the explanation for Sather and he told us we won't understand it.

PHONE CALLER: Two things, one on the Jets and the Knicks. Because I don't think you asked him about the thing with Bruce Ratner.

MIKE FRANCESCA: We didn't get to that. I haven't heard them make any overtures about Brooklyn being an issue. We didn't bring it up because I never heard that being an issue.

CHRIS RUSSO: Plus the NBA owners which --

MIKE FRANCESCA: He would have brought that up if he had a problem.

PHONE CALLER: In the beginning it was but I guess with the Jets and the West side stadium it became a bigger fish to fry.

MIKE FRANCESCA: These owners they socialize together. He was just honored by Woody Johnson's charity. They fight on one side and they hang out together on the other.

CHRIS RUSSO: You get the idea with fireman because he's getting a little publicity on this; he's on radio. He's Mr. Jet fan, he's not going to knock the Jets.

MIKE FRANCESCA: And he's a season ticket holder. A lot of the firemen have responded saying "hey, we're not for this." A lot of it. I think if you asked the union which one, are they against it or are they pro firemen, you will find the union is against it.

PHONE CALLER: I was going to weigh on the opposite side. I actually like when Jim Dolan when they were fighting against the Yankees, I actually think it was a positive thing.

CHRIS RUSSO: Why?

PHONE CALLER: The thing is the sport fan, of course, people who call into you are going to take the side that he is the bad guy and everything else, because they don't want to pay the extra money for the sports. But people who are casual sports fans, why should we have to pay?

MIKE FRANCESCA: That's an issue before the Congress. As a matter of fact the folks that want to see ESPN's power base destroyed, wanted that Congress to take that issue on, Congress refused because ESPN gets to charge people who don't even care about sports, for sports programming. That's the big issue.

CHRIS RUSSO: The problem I have with Dolan, if the shoe is on the other foot, not Dolan, Cablevision, if the shoe is on the foot, they would argue something different. They argue what is good for their bottom line.

MIKE FRANCESCA: They were businessmen. Got to call them out on what the issue is. You know they are always going to vote for their own pocketbook.

CHRIS RUSSO: The next time they would be on the opposite --

PHONE CALLER: I am a Cablevision customer, also, so I am not going to make him into a saint. On that issue you are going to get the point that he's the bad guy. I don't think the Yankees were the good guy either.

CHRIS RUSSO: The arbitrator ruled in favor of Dolan the next year.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Yes. Did they break the contract?

CHRIS RUSSO: When push came to shove at the point they had agreed. It was YES that went back -- after they had agreed. YES bailed out. So YES was the --

PHONE CALLER: One issue that was not talked about was the fact that like any major city it needs to grow. This is a project that will make the city grow. Yes there will be inconveniences, yes there will be problems. We have never had a project like this in probably in the last 30 years. If you talk about the World Trade Center, that was a major construction job, yes, it was inconveniences but it was built. Robert Moses did a great plan --

CHRIS RUSSO: You are talking about a stadium that's only going to be used for 8 games a year.

MIKE FRANCESCA: We're for progress. Why can't they build a new stadium and new complex that would bring all these things and put it in Queens?

PHONE CALLER: I couldn't agree with you more. But one thing that we have not done we have got --

MIKE FRANCESCA: I am not for putting in any city money. If they were building this thing all on their own I won't say a word. I can't say a word. That's free enterprise. That's the American way. They are not

doing that. They are using tax money. I don't even mind them getting a tax break because I understand these guys are going to get tax breaks.

CHRIS RUSSO: They shouldn't get 600 million dollars.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Yes, should not in any way get money to build the building.

CHRIS RUSSO: I am not going to tell Woody Johnson to go spend 800 million dollars -- if he's paying for it I can't tell him --

MIKE FRANCESCA: Tell Woody Johnson to put it wherever he wants if he wants to pay for all of it.

CHRIS RUSSO: That's the solution essentially.

MIKE FRANCESCA: Build your own stadium.

PHONE CALLER: I heard you just say that you had Jay Cross on and you are not going to get anything new from him. You guys should go back and listen to those interviews you did with Jay Cross because they are not interviews, those are interrogations and assaults. Jay almost never gets to speak. And you guys --

MIKE FRANCESCA: First of all, the two I did with Jay, the first one the issue was not -- the stadium never came up. It was the issue of that ridiculous rip-off that they changed, which was asking people to pay to be put on a waiting list. That was the first issue. The stadium issue was one other issue. Fans finance the stadium issue, you guys have shouted him down, that he doesn't know who his fans are.

CHRIS RUSSO: He doesn't.

MIKE FRANCESCA: He comes on with ridiculous claims -- you see, here's the problem, he's an interloper. He doesn't know anything about New York. He's not a New York guy. He spent all those years down in Miami building that arena before he got here.

PHONE CALLER: Don't you think somewhere in the Jet organization with all their resources don't you think they have spent time trying to figure out --

MIKE FRANCESCA: No, I don't think they care. I don't think they want their fans' voices heard because when we do informal polls on this, we get a lot more people -- Long Island Jet fan doesn't want the building in New York City.

CHRIS RUSSO: Bottom line about the Jets, they are more Long Island anyway.

MIKE FRANCESCA: More than half of their season tickets come from New Jersey. Yeah, they are frustrated football fans like Giant fans who can't get a ticket, plus there are scalpers that buy the tickets and sell them.

End of FastScripts by ASAP Sports...